

# Intoxicating Drinks

Bahá'u'lláh, Abdu'l-Baha, Shoghi Effendi

Partial translation



## Intoxicating Drinks

*"It is inadmissible that man, who hath been endowed with reason, should consume that which stealeth it away. Nay, rather it behooveth him to comport himself in a manner worthy of the human station, and not in accordance with the misdeeds of every heedless and wavering soul."*

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*"The Mystic Wine of the one true God hath a different intoxication and imparteth another exhilaration. The one diminisheth the intelligence of man, the other increaseth it. The one leadeth to perdition, the other bestoweth life."*<sup>2</sup>

*"Drink ye, O handmaidens of God, the Mystic Wine from the cup of My words. Cast away, then, from you that which your minds abhor, for it hath been forbidden unto you in His Tablets and His Scriptures. Beware lest ye barter away the River that is life indeed for that which the souls of the pure-hearted detest. Become ye intoxicated with the wine of the love of God, and not with that which deadeneth your minds, O ye that adore Him! Verily, it hath been forbidden unto every believer, whether man or woman. Thus hath the sun of My commandment shone forth above the horizon of My utterance, that the handmaidens who believe in Me may be illumined."*<sup>3</sup>

*"Fear ye God, O people of the earth, and think not that the wine We have mentioned in Our Tablet is the wine which men drink, and which causeth their intelligence to pass away, their human nature to be perverted, their light to be changed, and their purity to be soiled. Our intention is indeed that wine which intensifieth man's love for God, for His Chosen Ones and for His loved ones, and igniteth in the hearts the fire of God and love for Him, and glorification and praise of Him. So potent is this wine that a drop thereof will attract him who drinketh it to the court of His sanctity and nearness, and will enable him to attain the presence of God, the King, the Glorious, the Most Beauteous. It is a wine that blotteth out from the hearts of the true lovers all suggestions of limitation, establisheth the truth of the signs of His oneness and divine unity, and leadeth them to the Tabernacle of the Well-Beloved, in the presence of God, the Sovereign Lord, the Self-Subsisting, the All-Forgiving, the All-Generous. We meant by this Wine, the River of God, and His favour, the fountain of His living waters, and the Mystic Wine and its divine grace, even as it was revealed in the Qur'an, if ye are of those who understand. He said, and*

1. Baha'u'llah, The Most Holy Book, para 119

2. Baha'u'llah, from a Tablet - translated from the Persian

3. Baha'u'llah, Quoted in The Advent of Divine Justice



*how true is His utterance: "A wine delectable to those who drink it." And He had no purpose in this but the wine We have mentioned to you, O people of certitude!*

*Beware lest ye exchange the Wine of God for your own wine, for it will stupefy your minds, and turn your faces away from the Countenance of God, the All-Glorious, the Peerless, the Inaccessible. Approach it not, for it hath been forbidden unto you by the behest of God, the Exalted, the Almighty."*<sup>4</sup>

"Regarding the use of liquor: According to the text of the Book of Aqdas, both light and strong drinks are prohibited. The reason for this prohibition is that alcohol leadeth the mind astray and causeth the weakening of the body. **If alcohol were beneficial, it would have been brought into the world by the divine creation and not by the effort of man. Whatever is beneficial for man existeth in creation.** Now it hath been proved and is established medically and scientifically that liquor is harmful. As to the meaning of that which is written in the Tablets: *"I have chosen for thee whatsoever is in the heaven and the earth"*, this signifieth those things which are in accordance with the divine purpose and not the things which are harmful. For instance, one of the existing things is poison. Can we say that poison must be used as it hath been created by God? Nevertheless, intoxicating liquor, if prescribed by a physician for the patient and if its use is absolutely necessary, then it is permissible. In brief, I hope that thou mayest become inebriated with the wine of the love of God, find eternal bliss and receive inexhaustible joy and happiness. All wine hath depression as an after-effect, except the wine of the Love of God."<sup>5</sup>

"Intellect and the faculty of comprehension are God's gifts whereby man is distinguished from other animals. Will a wise man want to lose this Light in the darkness of intoxication? No, by God! This will not satisfy him! He will, rather, do that which will develop his powers of intelligence and understanding, and not increase his negligence, heedlessness and decline. This is an explicit text in the perspicuous Book, wherein God hath set forth every goodly virtue, and exposed every reprehensible act."<sup>6</sup>

"Concerning the use of alcoholic drinks and drugs the Guardian wishes you to know that they have been explicitly forbidden in the "Kitab-i-Aqdas". Opium is, undoubtedly, prohibited. But smoking, though allowed, is discouraged. Various other points which may be raised in this connection and which have not been explained in the Holy Writings have to be carefully considered and acted upon by the future International House of Justice which is the body empowered by Baha'u'llah to legislate in all matters which have not been explicitly revealed in the Sacred Writings of the Faith."<sup>7</sup>

"The wine mentioned in the Tablets has undoubtedly a spiritual meaning for in the book of Aqdas we are definitely forbidden to take not only wine, but everything that deranges the mind. In poetry as a whole wine is taken to have a different connotation than the ordinary intoxicating

<sup>4</sup>. Baha'u'llah, Lawh Ram "Wine"

<sup>5</sup>. Abdul-Baha, from a Tablet- translated from the Persian

<sup>6</sup>. Abdul-Baha, from a Tablet- translated from the Arabic

<sup>7</sup>. On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, Dawn of a New Day, December 27, 1933

liquid. We see it thus used by the Persian Poets such as Sa'di and Umar Khayam and Hafiz to mean that element which nears man to his divine beloved, which makes him forget his material self so as better to seek his spiritual desires. It is very necessary to tell the children what this wine means so that they may not confuse it with the ordinary wine."<sup>8</sup>

**"The drinking of wine,"** writes Abdu'l-Baha, **"is, according to the text of the Most Holy Book, forbidden; for it is the cause of chronic diseases, weakeneth the nerves, and consumeth the mind."** *"Drink ye, O handmaidens of God," Baha'u'llah Himself has affirmed, "the Mystic Wine from the cup of My words. Cast away, then, from you that which your minds abhor, for it hath been forbidden unto you in His Tablets and His Scriptures. Beware lest ye barter away the River that is life indeed for that which the souls of the pure-hearted detest. Become ye intoxicated with the wine of the love of God, and not with that which deadeneth your minds, O ye that adore Him! Verily, it hath been forbidden unto every believer, whether man or woman. Thus hath the sun of My commandment shone forth above the horizon of My utterance, that the handmaidens who believe in Me may be illumined."*<sup>9</sup>

"As to those believers who continue to drink, they should be lovingly exhorted, then firmly warned and eventually deprived of their voting rights. The number of times a person is exhorted and warned is a matter left to the discretion of each Local Spiritual Assembly, in consultation with the National Spiritual Assembly. The policy you adopt should not be one of removing the administrative rights of the believers in a bureaucratic and automatic way, as this would be unwise and unjust. Your Assembly as well as all Local Spiritual Assemblies should courageously and continuously remind the friends of their obligation in this respect, handle firmly all flagrant cases, and use such cases, in a way that by force of example, they exert their influence upon the other believers. It must be made clear to the Local Assemblies that they should be willing to cooperate with the believers affected by such drinking habits, when any such believer promises gradually and systematically to reduce his drinking with the objective in mind of entirely abandoning this habit. We feel sure that your National Assembly will, with wisdom, loving kindness and determination succeed in uprooting this evil from your ranks and bring about the spiritual upliftment and advancement of the believers under your area of jurisdiction."<sup>10</sup>

"Alcohol should not be served at any reception, either at home or in a public place, at which you are host... We believe you should not use the term "cocktail party". The designation of either "tea" or "reception" would be preferable."<sup>11</sup>

"Such employments [Bahá'ís who are in the employment of non-Bahá'ís and whose employment involves the serving or selling of alcoholic beverages] cover a very wide range of degree of involvement, therefore it is left to the individual to decide whether or not he feels his employment violates the spirit of the Bahá'í law. In cases of doubt he can, of course, consult his

<sup>8</sup>. On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, Lights of Divine Guidance (vol2), pp. 9-10

<sup>9</sup>. Shoghi Effendi, Advent of Divine Justice

<sup>10</sup>. Extract from letter written by the Universal House of Justice dated 12 November 1965 to a National Spiritual Assembly

<sup>11</sup>. Extract from letter written by the Universal House of Justice dated 31 December 1967 to an individual believer

Spiritual Assembly for advice. We have found no explicit text or instruction of the beloved Guardian on such a situation [the sale of alcoholic beverages by a business in which a Bahá'í is a partner with non-Bahá'ís] and feel that it is one in which no hard and fast rules should be drawn at the present time.... We feel that this is a matter which needs to be decided in each case in the light of the spirit of the teachings and the circumstances of the case, and unless the situation is one which is endangering the good name of the Faith or is obviously a ruse on the part of a believer to evade the Bahá'í law, it should be left to the conscience of the believer concerned who should, of course, be informed of the Bahá'í teachings concerning alcohol and should make every effort to dissociate himself from such an activity. The above [paragraph] concerns Bahá'ís who are already in partnerships dealing in such matters. It is, however, obvious that a Bahá'í who is not in such a situation should not enter into it." <sup>12</sup>

***“It is inadmissible that man, who hath been endowed with reason, should consume that which stealeth it away.***

There are many references in the Bahá'í Writings which prohibit the use of wine and other intoxicating drinks and which describe the deleterious effect of such intoxicants on the individual. In one of His Tablets, Baha'u'llah states:

*Beware lest ye exchange the Wine of God for your own wine, for it will stupefy your minds, and turn your faces away from the Countenance of God, the All-Glorious, the Peerless, the Inaccessible. Approach it not, for it hath been forbidden unto you by the behest of God, the Exalted, the Almighty.*

Abdu'lBaha explains that the Aqdas prohibits “*both light and strong drinks,*” and He states that the reason for prohibiting the use of alcoholic drinks is because “*alcohol leadeth the mind astray and causeth the weakening of the body.*”

Shoghi Effendi, in letters written on his behalf, states that this prohibition includes not only the consumption of wine but of “everything that deranges the mind,” and he clarifies that the use of alcohol is permitted only when it constitutes part of a medical treatment which is implemented “under the advice of a competent and conscientious physician, who may have to prescribe it for the cure of some special ailment.””<sup>13</sup>

**“the use of opium ... any substance that induceth sluggishness and torpor**

This prohibition of the use of opium is reiterated by Baha'u'llah in the final paragraph of the Kitab-i-Aqdas. In this connection, Shoghi Effendi stated that one of the requirements for “a chaste and holy life” is “total abstinence ... from opium, and from similar habit-forming drugs.” Heroin, hashish and other derivatives of cannabis such as marijuana, as well as hallucinogenic agents such as LSD, peyote and similar substances, are regarded as falling under this prohibition.

Abdu'lBaha has written:  
*As to opium, it is foul and accursed. God protect us from the punishment He inflicteth on the user. According to the explicit Text of the Most Holy Book, it is forbidden, and its use is utterly*

12. Extract from a memorandum dated 15 January 1976 to the International Teaching Centre

13. Notes to Kitab-i-Aqdas no. 144

condemned. Reason showeth that smoking opium is a kind of insanity, and experience attesteth that the user is completely cut off from the human kingdom. May God protect all against the perpetration of an act so hideous as this, an act which layeth in ruins the very foundation of what it is to be human, and which causeth the user to be dispossessed for ever and ever. For opium fasteneth on the soul so that the user's conscience dieth, his mind is blotted away, his perceptions are eroded. It turneth the living into the dead. It quencheth the natural heat. No greater harm can be conceived than that which opium inflicteth. Fortunate are they who never even speak the name of it; then think how wretched is the user.

O ye lovers of God! In this, the cycle of Almighty God, violence and force, constraint and oppression, are one and all condemned. It is, however, mandatory that the use of opium be prevented by any means whatsoever, that perchance the human race may be delivered from this most powerful of plagues. And otherwise, woe and misery to whoso falleth short of his duty to his Lord.

In one of His Tablets Abdu'lBaha has stated concerning opium: "the user, the buyer and the seller are all deprived of the bounty and grace of God."

In yet another Tablet, Abdu'lBaha has written: *Regarding hashish you have pointed out that some Persians have become habituated to its use. Gracious God! This is the worst of all intoxicants, and its prohibition is explicitly revealed. Its use causeth the disintegration of thought and the complete torpor of the soul. How could anyone seek the fruit of the infernal tree, and by partaking of it, be led to exemplify the qualities of a monster? How could one use this forbidden drug, and thus deprive himself of the blessings of the All-Merciful?*

*Alcohol consumeth the mind and causeth man to commit acts of absurdity, but this opium, this foul fruit of the infernal tree, and this wicked hashish extinguish the mind, freeze the spirit, petrify the soul, waste the body and leave man frustrated and lost.*

It should be noted that the above prohibition against taking certain classes of drugs does not forbid their use when prescribed by qualified physicians as part of a medical treatment."<sup>14</sup>



## Babi Dispensation

The Bab prohibited drinking intoxicating drinks, their use as medicine as well as buying and selling them. See Persian Bayan, Wahid IX, Chapter XIII



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<sup>14</sup>. Notes to Kitab-i-Aqdas no. 170

## Islamic Dispensation

*“And from the fruits of date-palms and grapes, you obtain sugar and (other) wholesome foods. Indeed, there is a sign in it for those who have reason.”*<sup>15</sup>

*“They ask you ‘O Prophet’ about intoxicants and gambling. Say, “There is great evil in both, as well as some benefit for people—but the evil outweighs the benefit”*<sup>16</sup>

*“O believers! Do not approach prayer while intoxicated until you are aware of what you say, nor in a state of ‘full’ impurity”*<sup>17</sup>

*“O believers! Intoxicants, gambling, idols, and drawing lots for decisions are all evil of Satan’s handiwork. So shun them so you may be successful.”*<sup>18</sup>

## Christian & Jewish Dispensation

The Holy Bible does not prohibit alcohol but warns against excessive drinking. See Psalm 104:15 and Ephesians 5:18 and Matthew 26:27-29 and Galatians 5:22-23



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<sup>15</sup>. The Holy Qur’an, Al-Nahil 16:76

<sup>16</sup>. The Holy Qur’an, Al-Baqarah, 2:219

<sup>17</sup>. The Holy Qur’an, Al-Nisa, 4:43

<sup>18</sup>. The Holy Qur’an, Al-Maidah, 5:90